Pulpit Preaching

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Contents

BUILDING CHRISTIAN HOMES

Marriage Is Serious Business 3
Aaron N. Meckel

One Child 5
Homer J. R. Elford

The Christian Home Is Heavenly 9
Armin C. Oldsen

The Hall of Human Mothers 10
J. Wallace Hamilton

WORTH QUOTING 16
E. Paul Hovey

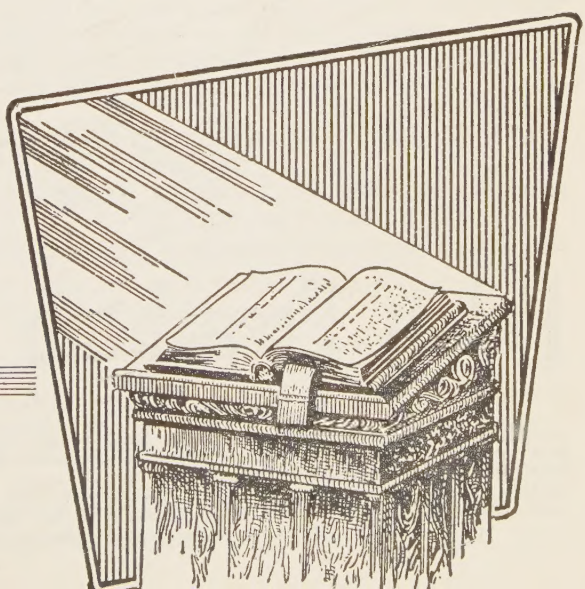
NEW LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Problems in Our Promised Lands 19
Edward W. Stimson

The Pathetic Element in Life 21
Karl H. A. Rest

Isaiah Speaks to America 25
Fred E. Luchs

Adam, Where Art Thou? 28
Bernhard W. Anderson



A PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL FOR MINISTERS

Editorial Comments

"Building Christian Homes," this month's first theme, anticipates the special days and services which are soon to honor the home, mother, father and children. "New Lessons from the Old Testament" is another in our series of sermons which seek to interpret life through the personalities and situations of the Biblical heritage.

"A Pastor's Pointed Pen" is a group of light verses by Dr. Leslie Conrad, Jr., executive secretary of the Luther League of America.

Next month's themes will be "A Sense of Holiness" and "Death—the Christian Perspective."

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BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

They Met at Calvary, W. E. Sangster, Abingdon, 111 pp., $2)

The Saving Person, Angus Dun (Harper, 127 pp., $2)

Joy in Believing, ed. by Walter Russell Bowie (Scribner, 248 pp., $2.95)

The Prophets (Harper's Annotated Bible), Julius A. Bewer (Harper, 663 pp., $5.95)

The Bible and the Human Quest, Algernon Odell Steele (Philosophic Library, 240 pp., $3.75)

The Freedom to Become Yourself, Roy A. Burkhart (Prentice-Hall, 264 pp., $4.95)

The Chaos of the Cults, J. K. Van Baalen (Eerdmans, 409 pp., $3.50)

"Most of the commerce of earth and heaven begins at Calvary," says the author of *They Met at Calvary,* who suggests the "deep reasons why that must be." Through the author's vivid words the reader again sees the Cross through the eyes of the individuals and groups who witnessed the crucifixion. Especially does the author make present-day readers sense their own participation in and their identification with the personnel of the passion.

The Saving Person (Harper's book for Lent, 1957) is based on the Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale and concerns, in the au-

(Continued on page 14)

A PASTOR'S POINTED PEN

Leslie Conrad, Jr.

Several Types of Sermon Preparation

The Pulpit Commentary is a source that I might use,
In case I were inclined to seek an overdose of snooze.

The latest book of sermons by a pulpiteer "hotshot,"
Might fool my sheep to thinking: "We are blessed with whom we've got!"

There's faithful *Matthew Henry,* 'twas a standby for Granddad.
(I say this to "Matt's" credit: he sure proved he was no fad!)

Or slap together stories from the *Digest, Life* and *Look,*
And blend them with some moral truths and leave my sheep "real shook."

Yes, I could use *The Bible,* and with prayer and study, too,
Attempt to meet my flock's prime needs — *precisely what I'll do!*

* * * *

A' la Roget

There was a minister in Tokay
Who manuscripted "a' la Roget."
But a scheme-minded crook
Made away with his book.
That minister has passed his heyday!

* * * *

Why Good Church Sextons Are Hard To Keep

Our sexton knows his ABC's
His D's and E's and XYZ's.
But still, his is a thankless job —
As thankless as a cornless cob.
For some the church is much too hot;
For others, it's a frigid spot.
Some like to worship in the light;
Some like it dim — who pinch "the mite."
For "Mrs. I. Am Gripingmost,"

(Continued on page 14)

Pulpit Preaching

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AARON N. MECKEL
HOMER J. R. ELFORD
ARMIN C. OLDSEN
J. WALLACE HAMILTON

Marriage Is Serious Business

AARON N. MECKEL, First Congregational Church, St. Petersburg, Florida

Sometime ago a young couple came to a minister to talk over plans for marriage. The young bridegroom-to-be said: "All that we have outside of each other is an automobile. Everything seems so unpredictable that we thought we would see how things went before we invested in any property." As though marriage were like buying a stove on thirty days' trial! But don't blame that young couple; they are merely reflecting the spirit of an age, uncertain, fickle, insure.

When I was in college I recall participating in a debate on the subject of "Companionate Marriage." I was on the negative side then, against it. And I still am "agin it." I am against the merely instrumental, experimental approach to marriage. I believe that there are some things so great and so sacred, that we ought to go into them with our minds made up, and that from the beginning.

After twenty-five years in the ministry, and after having the blessing of a wonderful helpmeet through those years to stand with me, I believe that we need to get back to first principles with regard to marriage. We need to see it within the Christian framework, where it belongs.

Yes, marriage is serious business! A friend of mine quipped somewhat when she knew my sermon subject for today. She said, "Why, I thought marriage was a very, very happy thing." "But," she added, with a twinkle in her eyes, 'I think a couple ought to talk it over a little before they go to the altar." Well, I should say so! All we need to do is to look around within this land of ours. Remember that one out of every five or six marriages is broken. Bear in mind the little children who are left to fend for themselves, and we should agree that marriage is serious business. Furthermore, if America is to lead the world in a great moral crusade, and to help bring men back again to the fundamental decencies, she must set her domestic household in order. It is an old adage—no nation can rise higher than the character of its people.

STORY OF REBECCA

One of the most beautiful stories ever written is in the twenty-fourth chapter of the book of Genesis. It is the account of the wooing of Rebecca. Wise old Abraham calls his favorite servant to him. He tells him, 'I don't want my boy taking up with the riff-raff around here. I want you to get over into Mesopotamia to our kin and look for a suitable wife for my son Isaac." That old servant was one of the finest matchmakers of all time! He had cunning, tact and common sense, as well as a sense of reverence. How beautiful the reply of Rebecca to the old servant's question, "Wilt thou come?" "I will come," she says.

On their return Isaac goes out to meet Rebecca realizing this is she who is to share his life with him. How beautiful the sequel, as we read it in this text from Genesis 24, "And Isaac took Rebecca to his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife and he loved her."

And then these words from the New Testament in the nineteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel: 'A man shall leave mother and father, and he shall be joined to his wife and they *two* shall be *one*," and He adds the words, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." You will recognize them, many of you, as the words that are read at every marriage ceremony.

Let me make it very clear that I am not unsympathetic with those who will have tried hard and have failed when it comes to marriage relationship. Many an hour of my ministry have I spent trying to console and be of help to such. After all, it takes *two* to make marriage a success. One person can't do it by himself alone. Remember, "They two shall be one."

Let us put down these words as our guiding maxim: Marriage, from the Christian vantage point, is not an experiment in thrills, but an adventure in understanding, in mutuality of the highest kind.

Now, I would like to say two things concerning this subject of ours. First, let marriage be entered into with open eyes and

with a will to succeed. Let those who approach the Christian altar say to themselves, all escape clauses are out! This is the point of no return, this is for keeps! Happy, lasting marriages don't just happen, they are made!

We, all of us, need a refresher course with regard to the meaning of marriage. Someone said to me, "Well, aren't most of us older people who have been married many years." I could only reply, "True, the young people need instruction; but often times it is the older folks who I see making the biggest fools out of themselves!"

Suppose two people came to the altar and that the minister should take out his service book. What words would he read? They are among the most beautiful words to be found in the English language. Let me quote a few of them: "For marriage is an honorable estate, instituted of God, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church, which Holy estate Christ beautified and adorned with His presence, and with the first miracle that He wrought in Cana of Galilee. And is commended of St. Paul to be honorable among all men, and therefore is not by anyone to be entered into, unadvisedly, or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God." And now these additional words, "Into this Holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined."

That is serious business; It deserves our best. It is not to be entered into carelessly, or with breath baited by liquor. And yet there are actually persons who are more painstaking in the purchase of a house or a car, yes, or even a dog, than they are in the selection of their life mate!

MORAL OBLIGATIONS

Here now are a few "Be's", not the kind that sting you, but the kind that impose lasting moral obligations upon you. First, be *sensible* when it comes to marriage. How we do need to get rid of the Hollywood mentality, and to face facts, when it comes to this Holy estate! Let the woman who comes to the marriage altar realize that this man standing by her side is hardly a Prince Charming! The fact is, he is a fallible mortal with feet of clay. The sooner she is aware of it, the better, and the less heartaches and the less regrets. The time will come, at least after the honeymoon, when he will track dirt in on her favorite rug, put his feet up on her favorite chair, and come home late for supper at night. And as for the man, let his also be realistic, and open-eyed to what he is doing. The fact is, she is hardly a Madonna! Let him see her away from the glare of the footlights, with make-up removed, and in an ordinary kitchen apron. Then let him love her just for what she is. Beauty is skin deep. It is character and inner integrity of soul that count. Be sensible.

Again *be earnest.* Let those who come to the marriage altar ask themselves frankly, What spiritual capital do we have to start with, and to invest in this wonderful adventure of ours? What ideals do we share in common? What heritage is ours? What about his, what about her, personal habits? Are they clean, wholesome and above reproach? Alas, too many a person has found, on the other side of the wedding altar, when it is too late, that he had married a problem rather than a posibility. Doubts are not enough.

Next *be big.* Be ready to forgive and to be forgiven. Many, many a time! How much unhappiness could be avoided if only husband and wife were magnanimous enough to say two little words every now and then, simply, "I'm sorry." John Wesley once said to Oglethorpe, when the latter was Governor of Colonial Georgia: "You had better forgive that man who did you wrong. Don't hold the grudge." To which Oglethorpe replied, "Sir, I never forgive." The rejoinder of John Wesley on that occasion is valid not only in the founding of a state, but in the making of a marriage: "Sir, then I hope you never need to be forgiven." Yes, be big.

Next, *be loyal.* Hear again the words of Jesus, "A man—or a woman—shall leave father and mother," and that takes in the *in-laws* also! — "and be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one." The teaching of Jesus can be stern and uncompromising. And how we *do* need sturdy, Christian teaching in these days! And as for infidelity within the marriage relationship, never be guilty of it. In marriage, as elsewhere, the way of the trangressor is hard. Hard as nails in fact. Disloyalty within the marriage relationship sears the conscience, and soils the character. I love those words, don't you, of Shakespeare, where he says,

> "Love is not love which alters when
> it alteration finds,
> Oh no, it is an ever fixed mark that
> looks on tempests
> And is never shaken."

FOE OF MARRIAGE

A man said something the other day which I think is worth repeating. Namely that the greatest foe of happiness in mar-

age is not so much disloyalty as slouch-ess. It is letting a marriage go to seed terms of "vegetativeness." Take that lit-e plant you set out beside your house. hat little plant lifts up its eyes every orning for the fresh dew from heaven to rture it; it reaches its tendrils out to-ard the radiance of the sun and drinks it . And when the kindness of the rain falls, is grateful for it. The fact is, the whole eation ministers to the well being of that ttle plant, that it may come to fruition. is a parable of what our duty is within e marriage relationship. Just think of the ttle attentions, the little gentilities, the vilities, the kindnesses, the inner spiritual mance that can make marriage a thing of auty that will be a joy forever! How many ngry hearts there are just waiting for at touch! Don't let your marriage rela-nship "vegetate!"

I am reminded of a story. It seems the adies Aid Group sent out a notice with re-ard to a rummage sale. The card read as llows: "We are going to have a rummage le. We are asking you to bring anything ou do not need much around the house, t which is too good to throw away. Bring our husbands!"

And now for this second thing. Many of ou wonder why I have not mentioned it al-ady. Perhaps I have hinted at it. A hap-marriage, like a happy home, must have e love of God and the grace of the Lord sus Christ at the heart and center of it. *inus* that it cannot last. *With* that noth-g can assail it. *Actually* what God has ined together, man never can put asun-r. No, not if God brought a man and oman together. You see, that is where we ed to make sure. What God has joined gether has eternal foundations. As akespeare said, "Love's not time's fool."

Horace Bushnell used to say, "A home ithout God is like a house without a roof." hink of that!

I was riding along in some heavy traffic e other day when I noticed the folks in e car just in front of me. The parents oked so happy sitting there in the front at. And the little children's faces, as they amed out through the back of the car at , were like sunflowers in full bloom. Then read the secret of that happy home. It as on a placard right above the car license: "*Read your Bible.*" How true it is that Bible reading homes, like praying homes, stay together! God pity any man who holds his religion in his wife's name! Remember—"They *two!*

VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

Recently I heard something said by an older man to a younger, that was very beautiful. I cannot remember the words precisely, but I will give you the gist of it as best I can. Said he, "Young man, if you want to know the road to true happiness, I can point you to it. First of all, keep your mind and your body and your soul clean and unspotted from the world. Then, when your time comes, go and find your Rebecca, lead her to a Christian altar, and there be united in the name of Christ. Then see to it that Christ is the head of your house, the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation.' Never forget it, son.

But there is more to it than that. Every marriage that is to be happy and lasting must have an altar beyond its own immediate altar. It must have a place of trysting in a Church that bears the name of Christ. See to it that your home has a working relationship to some Christian church, where the soul can be cleansed, where vows may be renewed, and where children, if heaven is kind enough to send them, may be consecrated.

"But son, there is even more than that. There are the middle years when you see the children grow up, and thy grow up so fast, too fast sometimes, we parents think. I remember my own mother, after the last of her eight children had left the home. She would sit at a window and watch the little children go by to school and shed tears. She was homesick for her family. Yes, there comes age and with it precious memories, and most of all a window opening up on heaven. My boy, happiness lies in that direction. Take that road and you will find it."

Remember the words of the Old Testament: "And Isaac took Rebecca and led her to his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife, and he loved her." And these words from the New Testament, even more precious, for if you will follow them, you will never go wrong: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder!"

ne Child

HOMER J. R. ELFORD, Trinity Methodist Church, Youngstown, Ohio

Our title for this sermon probably should ave been "Our Children," or some such collective term. However, I am striving to hold up the fact that individuals are of pri-

mary concern.

Whoever he may be, wherever he may live, whatever his relationships with others may be, the individual person is basic. Any philosophy of religion, sociology, science or politics which fails to have a high reward for individual people falls short of meeting the strict demands which life lays upon it. All of us are born singly, even though we may be a part of a set of twins, triplets or quints. All of us have individual characteristics and potentials. One psychologist claims that if we consider the potentials of one thousand different people we find that every one of them has at least one particular ability or quality of personality which no one of five hundred others possesses. Above all, let us never forget that every person is of unique worth in the sight of God and should be so regarded by himself and by other people. That was the principle which led Jesus to illustrate this sacred truth by saying of a little child, 'Of such is the Kingdom of God." Therefore, while many of us have more than one child in our homes, and while most of the relationships of life are group situations, it is important that we think of and deal with the child as an individual, seeking to discover all we can about him and how we can most effectively help him develop into the full mental, physical and spiritual stature of which he is capable.

DEMANDS OF INDIVIDUALITY

What are some of the things which we should recognize about the child as an individual? Having acknowledged that he possesses distinctive characteristics simply because no other child is made exactly like him, we had better go on to admit that just like his parents, his brothers and sisters, his teachers and his preacher, he has the innate desire to express himself, to make himself known and felt as an individual.

For a long time we have allowed ourselves to be quoted from the pulpits of our homes, our schools and our churches as saying that all of life should be placid and tranquil. Disliking arguments or conflicts of any kind and feeling that to let outsiders know that we don't always live under a blaze of sweetness and light would reflect our instability of character, we have hush-hushed one of the great, inescapable facts of life. When the truth is known, there isn't a family in the world that is worth its salt that doesn't have some disagreement or conflict over something at some time or other. The family at Nazareth, made up as it was of brothers, was not always in agreement by a long way. To agree always on every detail, never to question the decision of one member of the family, results in a type of dictatorship which makes life intolerable for some and boring for others. This is why the old tintypes in dusty family albums make us laugh. We aren't laughing at the Victorian clothes, but at the posed piety of the somber group who sought through this photograph to convey the idea to all members of the present and future generations that theirs was a happy, tranquil family, without blemish on any of its relationships.

SOME TENSION NEEDED

We are not trying to make a defense for the bickering, quarreling family which is often at such sword's points as to make living together intolerable and shameful, if not immoral and unchristian. We are only trying to look at this issue squarely and realize that from a factual standpoint some conflict in the home is a healthy thing. It gives everyone a chance to let off steam in the company of people who are disposed to forgive us because they love us. In the home we have this opportunity to express ourselves freely and discover in a controlled situation just how far we dare express ourselves in an uncontrolled situation such as on the playground, in the school, in the office and on the street. That's why it is invariably easier for a child who has had brothers and sisters to adjust himself or herself to the complexities of marriage and the other relationships of society.

Normal individuals have some aggressiveness, some jealousy, some selfishness. These traits are as normal as the hungers of the stomach, and the home is the place to learn how to handle these inborn traits of character. It is important that parents and grandparents and brothers and sisters recognize the conflicts, the arguments, yes, the spats which occur around the normal household as signs of individuality. To insist that there be no ruffling of the domestic waters is to insist that normal expression be curbed and that opportunities for growth be eliminated. The child or the adult who is never allowed to give vent to these natural feelings may eventually build up such hostilities and resentments that he loses his capacity to meet harsh realities of life except through violence.

We are saying that because the child is an individual with normal desires for recognition and response, he can be expected to try out many ways of gaining these goals. In the home, with people he really loves and who really love him, is the place where he

ould be gven an opportunity to learn the ost effective way of getting along with mself and with other people.

NEED FOR DISCIPLINE

There is, however, another side to the is-e. What we have been saying is not a bscription to the Freedom Theory which aintains that every child should be allow-l to get what he wants when he wants it, the means which require the least effort his part. "Don't curb the child" was a ogan being given wide support by some sychologists not too long ago, and it would em no coincidence that at the same time mething tragic was happening to our de-nquency records as well as to our statistics broken homes. The home is not only the ace where he should be blessed with some ndamental discipline which will equip him be a genuine social being. Now before any us get sore necks from nodding approval the word "discipline," let's examine what al discipline means.

J. C. Wynn, in his excellent book titled, *ow Christian Parents Face Family Pro-ems,* has remnided us that the word dis-pline comes from a Latin word meaning o teach." He says, "The best discipline is at which teaches, not the kind that hurts. hen handled well, our discipline is dis-nsed with love . . ."

Too often parents administer a spanking dole out some punishment because they n't want to take the time or don't really ow how to try to help the child under-and why he shouldn't act in a particular ay. Being annoyed or embarrassed at the ild's action — provoked, for example, be-use he has broken a dish that really wasn't o important anyway — we give vent to r emotions, not thinking much, if at all, out the effect which this will have upon e child. Too often we accompany the anking with some tirade about "You'll arn," or "You'll find out who's boss," thus dicating our determination to dominate.

Dr. Wynn has suggested some things hich we all should bear in mind as we y to do a better job of being parents at is point of discipline. For instance, wise thers and mothers recognize that there ust be rules in the home, just as there are les everywhere else in life. If the child to survive, he must know the rules of fety. If he is to be well he must be taught e rules of health. If he is to be socially ac-ptable in the home of friends, he must e taught the rules of courtesy. When it mes right down to it, the child wants to ow these rules, for he wants to be safe, he wants to be healthy and he wants to know how to conduct himself so as to be accepted socially. These are basic desires in the heart of everyone. We have to face up to the fact that someday we are not going to be on hand to guard our children from the realities of life and to precede them into every room to put things they shouldn't touch out of their reach. It is at the point of our methods of helping our children learn these basic rules of safety, health and acceptable conduct that so many of us fail as parents; and when we do fail, both the child himself, and everyone he is thrown with is in for a hard time of it.

RULES APPRECIATED

We have it on the authority of those who have made it their business to study such issues, that whether they always admit it or not, children appreciate firmness. They may not always show their appreciation; indeed, they may show their annoyance instead. Yet down deep underneath they like to know that there are some principles on which they can lean. As someone has put it, "The teenager, however much it may seem otherwise, really likes to know that there are definite standards about the places he may go and the things he may be allowed to do, even though he seems to wish that all life were anarchy so that he could ignore the laws for himself."

On the basis of that insight by a noted psychologist I believe we are right in assuming that this is the reason that for all the chatter they put up to the contrary, young people really like school. Find us a young man who has gone to Scout camp or military school who, though he may have chaffed under it at the time, really didn't like the discipline which was imposed upon him. There were set rules to be observed and punishment of some kind was meted out for an infraction of those rules. Those of us who have the responsibility of dealing with young people in such a voluntary situation as the Sunday School, Choir and Youth program have discovered that the average attendance goes up when we lay down some fair rules of conduct. Some don't like these rules and refuse to adhere to them, but the interesting thing is that the young people themselves begin to enforce them and soon put the incorrigible youth in his proper place.

One of the important things which we should bear in mind is that our discipline should be consistent. Parents must agree among themselves on the basic issues involved. If they do not, then the child is like-

ly to be torn between the conflicting directions of his father and mother, unsure of what is really right and afraid of the consequences of being forced to disobey one or the other of these people, both of whom he loves. Children rightly look to their parents for protection and guidance, though at the same time they rightly want to feel that they have made their own decision. It's a ticklish and treacherous business at best, but a key to it would seem to be to so direct the little, growing child in the simple decisions of life that we give him a firm ground on which to stand so that when he is by himself he will have formed habits of judgment which will enable him to make right decisions of his own. When this is our policy we may well expect that the child will make some mistakes, but we may be reasonably certain that they will not be intentional. They will be mistakes which can be forgiven for lack of judgment born of experience.

PARENTS NEED HELP

We know that in order really to help our children to grow to maturity, we need many resources. We need to read good books; we need to seize every opportunity to discuss our problems as parents with other parents; we need to be aware of the world in which our young people are living, their world of friendships and education. And then we recognize, too, that they have deep inner needs which can be met only with the understanding which comes from parents who have allied themselves with the great spiritual values which are synonymous with great religion. For this spiritual reinforcement we rightly look to the Christian church for guidance and leadership.

We need to be reminded that in the final analysis, our very lives as parents are the greatest single contributing factor toward the development of the child. Quite independent of the traits of character which they inherit through our bloodstreams, are the traits of character which they absorb through their inevitable contact with us in a multitude of varied situations. The way we observe the rules of safety and of health and the way we conduct ourselves as we seek to be socially acceptable make their marks upon the very life of the child. What we consider to be important about our conduct and attitude toward other people in the home and in the community at large will play a decisive role in the attitude and conduct of the child. The place we give to temporal matters, as concern money, furniture and clothes, will have their influence upon the standard of values adopted by the child. What we do about observing the rules of society, the laws of the community, state and nation will likewise be reflected in the regard which the child has for these rules and laws.

RELIGIOUS FAITH

At no point is this principle more dominating than at the point of religious faith. It begins at the very tender age when the child watches his parents bow their heads at the table before meals to offer a prayer of thanksgiving; it continues on through the trying experiences of life when the parents either display desperation or deep-seated devotion in the face of terrible odds. The child comes to appreciate that for these people with whom he is in daily contact the church is either something which is considered a kind of social nicety which is to be turned to at special seasons, or that it is something which forms a part of the very warp and woof of daily life. When the values for which the church stands are flaunted and when its mistakes and shortcomings are held up for ridicule and detractive criticism we need not be at all surprised if the children show no love for it. But when the parents are constantly striving through their active participation in its program to make of the church the perfect fellowship of creative living which it is designed to be, then we can rightly expect our children to likewise put the church first in their plans and in their lives.

How important it is that parents realize that parenthood is the most sacred privilege ever entrusted to them by the heavenly Father. People never show their real God-likeness quite so much as when they are engaged in the thrilling and tremendous job of helping little children toward physical, mental and spiritual maturity. They start out by offering up their very bodies as instruments through which God can carry on His plan of creation and then they give of their best strength of body and mind and spirit to direct these young lives toward fulfillment in order that God's wonderful plan of creation and fulfillment may be realized. It is a task so great that no parent or set of parents can ever hope to do it successfully alone. The beauty of it is, they don't have to do it alone. They are co-workers with God. That is the reason they bring their children to the church to feel in the baptismal service the very hand of God upon their shoulders, blessing them and assuring them of His continuing presence all the way along this glorious adventure of parenthood. That is why they bring them with them to

e church and entrust them to our conse-ated Sunday School teachers. That is why ey feel no inconvenience too great to see it that the child has every opportunity which the church program affords in order that he may really grow in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

he Christian Home Is Heavenly

ARMIN C. OLDSEN, St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lakeville, Ohio

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. — 1 John 4:11

One of the best-known and most loved gends concerning John, the beloved dis-ple of our Lord, is about his last, short rmon. He delivered it many times. When was too old and feeble any longer to alk to church, loving arms carried him. ut of respect and consideration he was ked in each service for his special mes-ge. He was always glad to give it. It was er the same: "Little children, love one nother." As Eastman tells the story, when hn in old age and almost blind arose to dress the congregation at Ephesus, he id: "How dark it is! I cannot seem to see he faces of my flock. Is that the sea that urmurs so, or is it weeping? Hush! My ttle children! God so loved the world He ve His Son; so love ye one another. Love od and men."

No message delivered anywhere, at any me is more important and there is no mes-ge that our world more desperately needs. his Gospel, John quotes Christ as saying Nicodemus: "God so loved the world, that e gave His only begotten Son, that whoso-er believeth in Him should not perish, t have everlasting life." In his first Epistle hn says: "We love God because He first ved us," and, "If God so loved us, we ght also to love one another." If love is be found anywhere on earth, it will cer-inly be in the Christian home. Let's look it there.

The truly Christian home is heavenly. It s been called a forecourt of heaven. A me can be like a corner of paradise — or can be like a corner of hell. Whether it one or the other is not an accident! Your me can actually be heavenly. Not in the nse that it will be perfect, but in the sense at God Himself will usually feel at home ere and that the virtues which God com-ands will be much in evidence. Inasmuch an imperfect human is married to an im-rfect human, and they live together in imperfect world, there will be some con-ict. At a silver or golden wedding anni-rsary the statement is sometimes made at those who are celebrating have not d the slightest clash in opinion during all the years of their marital bliss. Those who are paid such compliments know better. So long as the earth shall stand it will be true that you cannot possibly find a mate of whom you will not feel at sometime that he or she is—shall we say—unreasonable.

TODAY'S HOME

A certain amount of conflict in the home is inevitable. It always has been. It always will be. That condition in itself is not what is breaking up the modern home. We have been living in a time of great change and social upheaval. The home and the family have not escaped the influence of upsetting forces. Look at the family of a century ago. Its members were a close knit unit. They worked together, played together, worshipped together, lived together, they depended on one another. Today an individual can live alone and still satisfy his needs for protection, economic security, recreation, worship, and companionship. The members of a family of a century ago knew that society, and the law, and the Church, expected them to work out their problems. And they usually did! They appreciated the fact that real living takes place in the home. And that it is not always easy. There will be more than sunshine and roses; there will be storms and thorns. As they faced life together, without running away from it, their family became sturdy and strong.

Today society does not care too much when a family breaks up, in fact, there are those who seem to think it rather amusing. As for the Law, there is hardly a family that does not have an incident in its history, that would not be recognized somewhere as valid and sufficient reason to dissolve it. A large part of the Church still recognizes that marriage is a sacred institution of God which is lifelong and that to break it involves sin. If only the whole Church took that stand, at least church people would have more respect for marriage. Don't ever let anybody try to make you believe that marriage and the family are man-made arrangements and that man can therefore break them up without hurting somebody. A reputable and honest sociologist will tell

you that marriage, even monogamy, was not only in evidence, but was widely practiced in the earliest history of man. The Bible will tell you that marriage was given to Adam and Eve by God in the Garden of Eden, and when they were driven from the Garden it was not destroyed. They took it with them, because humanity cannot exist on a very high level without it. That's clear from history, too.

The family is the basic unit of society. It is the nursery where the pattern of a child's personality is formed and where the foundation of his character is laid. All other institutions can never completely eradicate what has happened to an individual in his early home life, they can only modify it. You and I today are largely what we became in the first years of our life under the dominating influence of our home. Our children will be tomorrow what they we becoming in our home today. Never lose sight of that! When there is unsolved conflict and tension in the home some measure of insecurity will became a part of those who are members of it, especially the children. A disproportionately large percentage of the cases of children who every year are victims of broken homes, or homes in which there is little or no love, eventually end up in asylums or jails. Statistics will forcefully bear me out on that. The home has correctly been called 'the seminary of all other institutions." No nation can ever be any stronger than its homes. No nation, therefore, has more dangerous enemies than those who by example and encouragement break up the home. Some of them are the heroes of our boys and girls.

CHRIST AS GUEST

The Christian home is heavenly. There Christ dwells as an invisible guest. There, as nowhere else, Christian virtues and Christian love flourish. When God established the family He did not depend on outside forces to hold it together: social pressure, legal restrictions, economic necessity. Right into the family itself He put a tie so strong that if it is properly established and preserved nothing on earth can break it. We call it love. It is not merely a romantic or sentimental attraction, but an unselfish devotion patterned after Christ's love for the Church. God says: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it." Too often, today, a marriage is consumated with nothing stronger to hold it together than the cords of lust. True love is anxious to sacrifice. It seeks the happiness of the person who is loved. Lust is selfish. It is interested not in what it can give, but in what it can get. It puts self-gratification above everything else. When the thinking of a pair on their wedding day has no prayerful consideration of mutual obligations and responsibility to God, to society, to their future family, no court or social pressure or economic need or dictum of the Church, in itself, will ever make of theirs a happy marriage, or of their home a corner of heaven. Romance, if it is not supported by unselfish love, respect, and devotion has a life expectancy a little shorter than that of a rosebud.

The finest definition I know of a successful marriage and family is this — it is truly Christian: When John is determined to make Mary as happy as possible as long as she shall live and to love her as Christ loved His church, and when Mary is determined to make John as happy as possible as long as he shall live and to love him as he loves her, and when Mary and John are determined with God's help to rear happy Christian children, and when their children love and respect them as God's representatives — well, I'll tell you, if we had more families like that our world, our nation, perhaps our home would be a much more blessed place in which to live.

Andre Maurois has suggested that this vow be made a part of every marriage ceremony: "I bind myself to thee for life; having chosen as I pleased, I will spend the rest of my life trying to please what I have chosen." That is truly Christian, too. Christ said: "By love, serve one another." John, His most faithful disciple encourages us: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

The Hall of Human Mothers

J. WALLACE HAMILTON, Pasadena Community Church, St. Petersburg, Florida

It had been a trying day for a young mother of three children—one of those days when patience is taxed to the limits of endurance. When at last the night had come, supper over, Bobby, Martha and baby David had been washed and tucked in bed, sitting down in an easy chair to rest just for a moment, she fell asleep; and in her sleep she dreamed.

It was on a strange island, far off in the

a; she found herself standing before a mple, a magnificent temple. Above its mas- ve pillars was its name, "The Hall of Hu- an Mothers." Around it was a garden e an Eden paradise, in her ears the song birds and the whisper of the sea, in her strlis the fragrance of flowers and veetness of the orange blossom; all around r visions of exquisite beauty, far stretches green, luxuriant rose beds, weeping wil- ws bending down, fountains of sparkling ater springing up. It was restful, like the ace of God, and all her tiredness was ne. Written into stone at her feet were rds which seemed to exactly echo her vn feelings:

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the bird for mirth;
You are nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.

"Earth?" she asked, looking up the broad, den stairway, "but this can't be earth." voice behind her spoke. Turning, she ked into a face, a friendly, manly face, face like all men's faces but kind and true d strong. He spoke again. 'You would like enter?" His voice was strong and reson- t, lik ethe voice that spoke to Mary on e Resurrection morn. With that intuitive culty strong in women, she swiftly dged Him. Under her breath she was say- g, "This is the friend of mothers," and mehow all her fear was gone. "You would e to enter?" "Yes, very much." Up many eps they went, shiny, golden steps; on each p a word making a sentence which she ad as they ascended: "God-could-not-be- erywhere, so-He-made-mothers." At the uch of His hand the great panel doors ung open silently. It was a room of pic- res, statues, poetry, music; and where one ded and the other began could not be arly distinguished. The music seemed like etry, and the poetry was music, all blend- g into one great poem like one grand an- em of Creation.

I

"Motherhood is life," the Guide said soft- . "Do you see, in green fields of grass and ain, in flowering gardens and blossoming uit, in yonder nest of the mocking bird, meadow and in forest, beside the laugh- g waters where lambs and squirrels play?" ome call it nature," He went on, "but hers call it God. In God's great garden, otherhood means life. Do you see? Do you ar the glad music as it swells up into the rs of God—life?"

She tried to speak, but the words would not come. In the presence of the mystery she felt like Moses before the burning bush. It was so far-reaching, this story of a mother and a child, from primeval matter of Mother Earth to Sistine Madonna with a halo on her head, from the first wild outburst of maternal joy to the last, blinding cry of its grief. Here it was—written, portrayed in single panorama. Never before had she realized her kinship with all nature, her oneness with all living things; as mother of Bobby and Martha and David, part of a plan bigger than mind could grasp. Motherhood is life, and a divine Someone back of it working out His will and purpose through it, breathing holiness and glory and dignity into it. "A sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, a motion and a spirit that impels all living things."

"Of course," said the Guide, "you are thinking now of your own mother." "Yes, I am. How did you know?" 'Everybody does here, for this is the floor of life, and when we thank God for life we must thank God for mothers, for without mothers there is no life." She was standing before a picture —"Whistler's Mother"—but as she looked in the face, the face became the face of her own mother. She wanted to speak, to say to her mother what she felt, and words came strangely to her lips:

You painted no madonnas on chapel walls in Rome,
But with a touch diviner, you lived one in your home;
You carved no shapeless marble to some high soul design,
But with a finer sculpture, you shaped this soul of mine;
You built no great cathedrals that centuries applaud,
But with a grace exquisite, your life cathedraled God.

II

Suddenly they were standing between two long, sweeping stairways, one winding up into the light, the other disappearing into dark. "Come," He said, "Let us go down." "Down? We cannot go down. Motherhood is up." "Alas," He said, "not always up. There is a level below the beautiful and beneath God's plan, and some have lived upon it." She followed, listening as they went. "You see, motherhood in itself is neither good nor bad. The mere giving birth to offspring does not entitle motherhood to honor. Do not even birds and beasts bear offspring? The tigress in the jungle protects her young

as eagerly as you shield little David. For God has made life so. By other standards, and higher, must human mothers be appraised. There are those who have wanted to be mothers but who went to the grave with childless arms. There are mothers who have not wanted to be mothers, and here in this dark place are mothers who should never have been mothers." Long, dark corridors of statues, paintings, pictures, but no music; mothers from all lands, all ages, all races, some beautiful of face and arrayed in robes of royalty. With a few of them she was familiar, their names were written into history: Catherine de' Medici, unscrupulous mother of kings who died without a friend; Agrippina, mother of Nero, a woman of whom it is impossible to speak in terms of praise — she poisoned two husbands, wrote her vicious nature into the life of her monstrous son; Jezebel who did only evil in the sight of the Lord; and long rows of faces and figures, famous and infamous, high and low, brilliant and obscure — mothers who had trifled with their trust. You see, these too, were mothers who lived beneath God's plan. Some of the most despicable women in history have been mothers.

One figure especially held her — a woman holding on a tray the severed head of the prophet. She knew without looking who it was — Herodias whose daughter, Salome, danced before the king. The infatuated, wine-crazed king offered to give her whatever her heart desired. She consulted her mother who said immediately, "The head of John, the Baptist." And underneath was written one sentence: "She wanted what her mother wanted." "It is always so," the Guide was saying, "in every home, in every generation, mothers hold the key. The children want what their mothers want, and get what their mothers most desire." Still it is everlastingly true, the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, and sometimes wrecks it.

III

"But come, let us go up — for motherhood is beautiful." Climbing up into the light again, passing the floor of life, she noticed the words on the second flight of steps: "Sweet - and-beautiful-is-the - way-of-sacrifice." At first she dreaded to enter the portals of the second floor, fearing what she might see. Sacrifice — she knew a little of what that meant. But her Guide said, "Do not be afraid of sacrifice. It is the law of life, and more than any other, mothers have made it live." And here again were mothers, long, long rows of them: statues, pictures, poems, young mothers like herself; some in the wearisome task of daily drudgery, patching old clothes, bending over wash tubs; one bending above a cot with sleepless eyes, watching the flush of fever in a sick child's cheek; some fighting off an enemy wtih the fury of an animal at bay. In one picture was a circus parade, with people lining the street waiting for the marchers. But a young mother whose family had come to town to see the parade, remained up a side street, perfectly happy playing with her baby. What, to her, were the floating banners, the sights that dazzled others? Her parade was in her arms. And she thought of the times she had stayed at home when others were going out, and strange, it did not seem a sacrifice.

There were old mothers, too, mothers with white hair and kindly eyes and lips grown softly sweet with murmured blessings over sleeping babes. There was something in their quiet grace that spoke the calm of Sabbath afternoons — old mothers made sweet and beautiful through sacrifice.

There were pioneer mothers here, brave women with mud on their boots, in the long trek to frontier lands. Some were compelled to drop out of the line of march to give birth, pick up the precious bundle and trudge on next day. Among these was a woman who came alone, bearing a boy child under her heart. "She was sad with sorrows like dark stars in blue mists." But Nancy Hanks had seen the tall hills of Kentucky, and though she died at thirty-six, she had cherished the hope that beyond the drudgery and endless, heartbreaking toil there was something in this new land worth living for and dying for. "Be a good boy, Abraham. Be somebody, Abe." And long, lanky, homely Lincoln rose up to make her dream come true. And here, a woman standing in a field, a field of crosses, row on row — Flander's Field or was it Okinawa? A gold star was on her breast, but a cross was in her heart. Her boy had hated no one, and perhaps the one who killed him had not hated either. But someone had said, "The honor of our country has been threatened," and mothers answered, paid the awful price in sacrifice, and now she had a star, a pathetic tinseled star. 'A son for slaughter and a star for praise."

Is there a madness underneath the sun
more strange,
More terrible, or anyone more pitiful
than this,

That for a star a mother gives her flesh
and blood to war?
Is there debauchery more deep than
this,
The state betraying mother with a kiss,
Bribing the mothers of the world to sell
for tinseled star
Their flesh and blood to hell?

eautiful sacrifice, but why, and for what?

She stood looking for a moment at the
other with a star. She thought of Bobby
nd little David fast asleep; looked frankly
to the face of her Guide: "No, I won't do
. I will not walk this path." She turned
nd ran, did not stop until, breathless, she
as down the winding stair and at the door.
nd there, as if appearing from nowhere,
ood her Guide waiting. "I am sorry," she
aid, "I did not mean to run away. But I've
een enough. Pain, tears, sacrifice, for
hat?" "Yes, I know," He answered kindly,
ithout in the least chiding her. "But you
aven't seen the best. You must see the best.
very mother should see the best."

IV

As if on a magic carpet, they were swept
p into the brightest room of all, and here
ere mothers, their faces lighted by a glow
hat streamed down from the over-arching
me, not an earthly light, a light borrow-
d from above and glowing in their faces.
ere was Hannah with her boy, Samuel, in
he house of the Lord. And here a mother
ealthily hiding her baby in a cradle of
ulrushes — Jochebed, mother of Moses.
ere a quiet peasant woman with children
athered round her, patiently putting her
ith into the minds and hearts of her grow-
g family — Eunice, mother of Timothy;
ary, mother of Mark; and Suzanna Wes-
y, training her brood to love God and cry
ftly.

And over there a mother sitting at a win-
ow — Monica, mother of Augustine. Her
n had led a career of debauchery. By the
neer force of her tears and prayers, she
as followed him through years of sensual-
y and by the strength of her prayers has
rought him back to God. Here she sits
ith her reclaimed, regenerated son by her
de, both looking together out toward the
estern sea. He turns his dark, intellectual,
un-tanned face toward hers, and for a mo-
ent the light of the glory of God is upon
hem. Underneath are the words: "She shot
he deathless passion in her eyes through
im and made him hers. She laid her mind
pon his mind and he believed in her belief."

"What a pity," she said, that mothers like these should die." "Die? Die? That word has no meaning here. Mothers do not die. They write something into life that goes on and on forever. Even bad mothers do not die. They live on in children and in children's children. Is the mother of Nero dead? Has the influence of Napoleon's mother ceased? When the mind of one child is warped by a mother's false ambition, the blood of unborn generations will be spilled. As ink stains water, a mother's failure lives on in human life. Or indeed," He asked, "on this higher level has the mother of Abraham Lincoln perished from the earth? Stand before Suzanna Wesley and ask if good mothers die. Every person's work, once written, goes on like Tennyson's brook, forever. These mothers on whose faces the light is shining now are, every one, registered somewhere in life as really as their names are written in the book of life."

V

Bewildered, she moved on among the living statues, passing some, pausing before others, some famous, others like the unknown soldier without any name on earth, but all remembered here and all with upturned faces seeking light, seeing light. "I see it now," she said. "It is Light that made these mothers what they were — Light not their own, more than instinct, more than human." Drawn by sudden impulse, she too looked up and saw what they were seeing. High up in the brilliant dome a Face, strangely like the face of her Guide, a Face like all men's faces but strong and kind and true. Around His face, like the shifting of Aurora Borealis, played lights and shadows, little pictures that came and went. First, a mother in a manger: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins." Then a mother watching her boy sweep up shavings from the floor and stretching His arms, and in the ray of light she saw on the wall behind Him the shadow of a cross. And then on a hillside a mother standing by a cross upraised against the sky. "There stood by His cross Mary, His mother." Yes, even in the shadows behind Him was a human mother.

Then swiftly the light grew more intense, flashing up into the dome. The earth seemed to shake with the tramp of marching men and women. Heros and heroines of faith, from the east and west and north and south, marching by, leaning on arms of mothers — mothers whose faces were turned toward the Light. And a song rose up from a million throats in heavon and on

earth that seemed like the voice of many waters:

> In the cross of Christ I glory,
> Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
> All the light of sacred story
> Gathers round its head sublime.

Deeply moved, she stood there wondering if Bobby and Martha and David would some day march with these. "I must be going," she said aloud. "But you'll be back with us one day." "I'm afraid." "But your name is in the book." "Yes. That's why I am afraid. I would like to come back." "But you will be back." "I wish I could resolve." "You wish?" "God helping me, I will come back." "On what floor shall we make ready your place?" She tried furiously to think; and waking, He was gone. But His question remained: "On which floor shall we make ready your place?"

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

Continued from page 2

thor's words, "the heart of the minister's calling . . . to open to men the salvation offered in Christ." Here the theme of salvation is presented with a relevance, a depth and a compulsion that is refreshening, reinvigorating and inspiring.

Selections from the sermons and prayers of Henry Sloane Coffin, brought together with a sensitive and discerning skill, make *Joy in Believing* a devotional classic. This is a word portrait of a great spiritual leader who searched deeply into biblical and human experience and offered his wisdom in radiant and moving language. The prayers are remarkable in expression and meaning.

The distinguished biblical scholar, Julius A. Bewer, has rendered an invaluable service through his illuminating annotations to the fifteen Old Testament prophetic books, plus Daniel, in *The Prophets*. Each study includes an introduction and the full Bible text (KJV). The notes occupy more than half of most pages. This valuable book will become a source to which pastors will turn continually.

The Bible and the Human Quest relates the Bible to the great affirmations of the human spirit and to the everyday needs of human life. Much of the book will be useful to the minister's interpretation both of the Bible and the needs of men. Ease in writing and an abundance of illustrative materials add to the appeal of a book which features the Bible's anticipation of the goals toward which modern man persistently strives.

Roy Burkhart's ministry has long attracted national attention and has become a pattern which pastors and churches have emulated in their response to the problems of men. *The Freedom to Become Yourself* is a harvest of years of experience and person-to-person contacts. The first four divisions of the book are titled: The Freedom of Thought and Feeling, The Freedom of Wholesness of Body and Mind, The Freedom of the Ageless Spirit, and The Freedom of Eternal Life of Now. Part five is "A Program of Personal and Group Research." In a day when so many books represent a shallow, inadequate guide to life's wholeness, it is good to have this volume which measures life's meanings in terms of God and eternal reality. As a study book for pastors, a treasury of vivid personal illustrations and as a stimulus to sermon preparation, this book is highly commended.

The Chaos of Cults sketches the history, outlines the theology and evaluates the challenge of the "isms" which threaten evangelical Christianity. These cults includes Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'sm, Christian Science, among others. Much research and analysis has been put into this compact volume which points decisively to the appeals and the shortcomings of many of today's strange new gospels.

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A PASTOR'S POINTED PEN

Continued from page 2

The sexton needs more "Emily Post."
When Mae can't find her own hymnbook,
The sexton gets a dirty look.
The same is true of "High C" Jane,
Of "Mr. Met." and "Basso" Paine.
Of church-lawn grass gets somewhat tall,
He'll be advised, "Get on the ball!"
Should he, by chance, leave doors unlocked,
The Ladies Aid will be real shocked.

To me, he is a human jet.
I praise him every chance I get!

* * * *

"My Main Point . . ."

There was a time when sermons had
Three stated points—and that was that!
Some preachers now conceal their points
Like FBI Men hide a gat!

* * * *

Unmailed Letter
To
The Movers Of Preachers*

"Dear Boss, I'm ready for a change —

Am I not ripe for 'big church' flocks?—
Expand me to the larger range;
You keep the keys to parish locks.

I've served the Lord right well, Boss Dear.
I've put Fifth Church upon its feet.
But I'm convinced the time is here
To take my wares to FIRST . . . Main Street!"

Bishops, Presidents of Synods, District Superintendents, etc.

No Longer Meek

There was a young preacher at Shrewdam,
Who tried to be meek as an ewe lamb.
But when bad went to worse
And his 'sheep" cut his purse,
He exercised all of his Di'phragh!

* * * *

The Ladies Aid

The Ladies Aid ah! what a group!
They sell; they sew; they serve the soup!
Would "Webster," if he were "un-laid"
Define them as the LADIES??? AID??

Worth Quoting

E. PAUL HOVEY, Congregational Presbyterian Church, Lewiston, Idaho

We Christians should know better about pain—that it's pain accepted which alone can express love, and then bring true joy, in life. The cross accepted—voluntarily — pain accepted, but for one whom one loves! Then life takes on a new and different quality and it is the reflection of the very love of God himself in the giving of his Son. "Love," you see, "is not velvet," as Vachel Lindsay put it in a poem. "Love is not velvet, not all of it velvet." Christian theology ultimately finds the whole meaning of life, its beginning, its end, its purpose, its practice, in the relationships of human beings, persons to persons, including the person of God himself. What, then, is a Christian Church? It is people in loving communion. People who love God and love each other. This is where the essence of the power of the Christian Church either is or is not. . . . Unless there are people who are responding to the love of God as revealed in Christ and so are worshipping him, the Church is not very important.

—Eugene Carson Blake

* * * *

In the Christian perspective nothing is clearer than the continuance of the fact of sin in the life of man. In every environment and in every historic era man is confronted by the choice whether to seek in humility the will of God in administering the resources God has entrusted to him, or to use the divine gifts of nature and man's genius simply to satisfy his self-centered desires. It is clear from the Bible and from experience that the selfishness of man vastly multiplies his problems and threatens his destruction on every level of attainment.

The warnings of Scripture against the seductions of prosperity are most explicit. If ever there was a time when as a people we needed to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God—that time is now. We may be sure that to whom much has been given of him shall much be required.

—*American Abundance* ("Message and Reports of Third National Study Conference on the Church and Economic Life")

* * * *

Dr. Paul S. Wright . . . often tells his people that the Church is essentially a hospital. It's a hospital which welcomes all of those who need to be helped to learn to live in the Spirit of Christ. All of us, not for a few, all of us together. And he says, "Everyone is welcome, however sick you are, however much of the resentment and the hatred of so-called human nature keeps coming out." And then because in that soft manner of his there is a basic iron, he said: "But there is one thing we can never do in this hospital, and that is be willing to allow ourselves to go on being sick. The sin is here. The sickness is here within the fellowship. But the love which we believe in, which extends to all the brethren and beyond—this we must hold on to. Here is the health that comes from God in Christ."

—Eugene Carson Blake

* * * *

Since . . . we live in the past, in the future, and in the present—we must . . . ask how we, as Christians, live in the past, in the future, and in the present, and that means how our relation to Jesus Christ affects our living in the past, the future, and the present. The answer of the New Testament is precisely these three words: we live in the past by faith; we live in the future by hope; we live in the present by love. That is the reason why each one of these three great words expresses the whole of our existence without competing with the others.

—Emil Brunner, *Faith, Hope and Love* (Westminster).

We are Christians because we are related to a historical fact, the fact of history which we all know, the person of Jesus Christ in whom God has revealed himself and by whom man's situation is changed from one of being lost to one of being redeemed. The gospel of Christ witnesses to this fact as being absolutely decisive for man, and that through his faith. This fact not only is unique; it is explicitly spoken of as unique. It is not unique by comparison, because it is above comparsion. It is unique by its very nature as unprecedented and unrepeatable. Redemption or reconciliation either has never happened or it has happened once for all.

—Emil Brunner

* * * *

The cross of Christ is the point where God's love meets sinful man, if the sinful man, also, stands there, that is, by faith. God's act is always an act that engages man and has meaning only if man lets himself be engaged, or to be touched. God's act in Christ is that he gives man a new "standing" and thereby creates for him a new

situation. In the cross of Christ, God says to man: "There is where you ought to be. Jesus, my Son, hangs there in your stead; his tragedy is the tragedy of your life. You are the rebel who should be hanged on the gallows. But, lo, I suffer instead of you and because of you, because I love you in spite of what you are. My love for you is so great that I meet you there with my love, there on the cross. I cannot meet you anywhere else. You must meet me there, by identifying yourself with the one on the cross. It is by this identification that I, God, can meet you, man, in him, saying to you what I say to him: 'My beloved son.'"

—Emil Brunner

* * * *

Tyranny becomes the instrument of judgment upon the weakness of a free society and appears to be the more successful instrument precisely because it does not, and seemingly need not, face all the difficulties to which any tolerably free and uncoerced partnership of men is exposed.

—Reinhold Niebuhr in *The New Leader.*

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Any civilization which has achieved a better cure for injustice without annulling its freedom will find it particularly trying to stand under the judgment of a foe whose judgments are informed by a dogma according to which he is righteous and the rest of the world evil. We find these judgments particularly trying because they are in one sense so outrageous, and they are in another sense so close to the mark. . . . We must learn to profit by the criticisms of those who do not like us by considering that there may be a grain of truth in the malicious vituperations which our enemies level against us. It may be precisely the truth which has been obscured about us in the ritual of self-esteem in which we are always involved.

—Reinhold Niebuhr

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Sitting beside me in the room where I am writing, a college boy has been planning a bicycle tour of England. He had been poring over the road maps to see how he can avoid the hills. If he stays on the level he will miss the best of England. . . . Why should we pity him or smile at him? Do we not study the map of life in advance to see how we can avoid its hills?

The French painter Tissot has illustrated . . . Jesus . . . striding resolutely over the brow of a Palestinian hillside; the desciples straggle wearily behind. A friend once said to me that no interpretation of Christianity could ever satisfy him which did not capture and communicate the energetic spirit which Tissot put into his figure of Jesus. A Christian might as well make his peace with the fact that he cannot travel on the level.

—Willard L. Sperry

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An English novelist of the last century tells us that the greatest help we get in time or trouble comes to us from one who says quite simply, "I have experienced all that." Here, perhaps, is a clue to the source of the power which the figure of Jesus has over us. As we read the gospels we know that we do not wholly understand him, but we feel that here is one who understands us. A great deal of life is a tedious and unsuccessful attempt to explain ourselves to being only half understood, if not misunderstood. When we open the gospels the situation is changed. To the deepest self we can identify a voice saying, "I have experienced all that."

—Willard L. Sperry

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It would be a strange army if all the privates decided to do the commanding. Or if, when the general commanded, instead of obeying, the soldiers began to grouse around about the weather or the lack of equipment, or to complain that they were a little bored with the whole deal anyway. Imagine the court-martials that would follow!

Now let's get this clear: God is not some second lieutenant giving orders for someone else. He is the Almighty! When he commands, "Go," we had better go. If the command of God—that inner urge—says, "Go," don't dillydally. Go!

Jay M. Logan in *Forward*

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Nobody in this world is more secure than a man in a penitentiary. He is fed, clothed and housed. But he is not free to go and come as he pleases. He is watched, guarded and disciplined. There are millions of people in other lands who have that same kind of security. But we . . . have always believed that the only real security lies in liberty and opportunity.

—Harvey S. Firestone, Jr.

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When about to make his will, a father informed his two sons that the bulk of his fortune would go to the one who could best fill the room with what he bought for a shilling.

The two sons departed and presently returned. The first had bought straw, which, however, not only failed to fill the room, but even to cover the floor. The second pro-

duced and lit a great candle, which threw its beams to very corner of the room.

"The money is yours," said his father.

Let your light shine like that in the sight of men. Let them see the good things you do and praise your Father in Heaven.

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Life is the acceptance of responsibilities or their evasion; it is a business of meeting obligations or avoiding them. To every man the choice is continually being offered, and by the manner of his choosing you may fairly measure him.

—Ben Ames Williams

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A Finn once suggested to me that in every conversation between two people there are always at least six persons present. What each person said are two; what each person meant to say are two more; and what each person understood the other to say are two more. There is certainly no reason to stop at six, but the fathomless depth of the listener who can go beyond words, who can even go beyond the conscious meanings behind words and who can listen with the third ear for what is unconsciously being meant by the speaker, this fashion of attentive listening furnishes a climate where the most unexpected disclosures occur that are in the way of being mircales in one sense, and the most natural and obvious things in the world, on the other.

—Douglas V. Steere, *On Listening to Another* (Harper)

God's providence never places you where his grace cannot keep you.

—Earl Riney

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To the rich young man God had been only a distant Lawgiver, and abstract idea. Christ was . . . showing him a Divine Father with a helping hand of love reaching out to draw him near. A missionary traveler in China reports watching the unloading of a cargo boat at the bank of a muddy river. An overseer stood on the bank keeping a tally of the work as the coolies stumbled up the slippery bank with their heavy loads. The missionary was somewhat amazed to see the overseer from time to time put down the tally sheet, step down, and give a hand to a struggling coolie, muddying his own shoes and clothes in the process. It was less amazing on inquiry to discover that the overseer was an active member of the local church, not only putting his Christianity into practice, but unconsciously acting out a parable of God Himself, not just sitting in His heaven keeping a tally sheet of our sins, but stepping down into the tragedy and confusion of our sinful world to help us in our struggles and to lift us out of our sins.

—R. Park Johnson

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It's good to have money and the things money can buy. It's good, too, to check up once in a while and make sure you haven't lost the things money can't buy.

—George Horace Lorimer

EDWARD W. STIMSON
KARL H. A. REST
FRED E. LUCHS
BERNHARD W. ANDERSON

New Lessons From The Old Testament

Problems in Our Promised Lands

EDWARD W. STIMSON, Dundee Presbyterian Church, Omaha, Nebraska

At that time the Canaanites were in the land. — *Genesis 12:6*

For years Abraham had lived with a dream in his heart: the dream of a land of promise where all his hopes would be fulfilled. Where his father Terah's family had lived there had always been problems. In Ur of the Chaldees the neighbors had been numerous and quarrelsome. Besides they were idol worshippers, and contentions arose between them and this family, which worshipped the God of Heaven. Especially when Hammurabi of Babylon imposed his gods upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, and the family was exposed to the idolatrous and licentious worship of the Moon Goddess Sin, they began to talk of moving. Meanwhile Sarah, Abram's wife, was barren. Perhaps if they moved away from all this contention and strife into a land of peace and plenty and contentment, where all their problems would be left behind, she might bear children.

So they prayed about it, and were guided to leave Ur of the Chaldees, to go far westward to a land they had heard about, the land of Canaan. When they reached the land of Haran, where some of their relatives lived, they settled there, until Terah, the old man, died.

But Abraham had not forgotten the dream. And one night the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you, and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great and by you all the families of the earth will bless themselves." It was the promise of God, renewed!

So Abram took his wife, and his nephew, Lot, and all their servants and herds they had gathered in Haran, and again they journeyed toward the westward land of promise. They passed by the ancient city of Damascus, with the snow-capped mountains of Lebanon on their right to the westward, and finally came to the banks of the upper Jordan, below the Waters of Merom, above the shining Sea of Chinnereth, the Sea of Galilee. There they had their first view of the promised land, where the Jordan valley is broad and the hills of Galilee are gentle, leading on to the rich valley of the River Kishon, the great plain of Esdraelon.

Here indeed was a delightful place, where sheep and cattle might safely graze and fields of grain bend before the caress of soft winds. Here little children might safely play, the children Abraham still hoped would come, for had not God promised to make of him a great nation? So they had found refuge and haven at the end of their long wandering in a land flowing with milk and honey. Canaan appeared as a truly promised land where high hopes and deferred dreams might at last come true under God's good guidance.

THE REALISTIC DISCLOSURE

But this idyllic vision was soon rudely jolted by a brutal fact, which became apparent when Abraham began to explore this land of promise. We read, "When they had come to the Land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land."

That was all that needed to be said. The Canaanites had the land, and with them possession was about ten-tenths of the law, and they had no intention of leaving. Furthermore, the Canaanites were not the easiest people to get along with, as anyone might suspect who remembers them to be the descendants of Ham, who was not the best son Noah ever had. Had Abraham told them he had been called to possess this land by Yahweh, the one true God, their answer might have been a terse question, "Who is he?"

We sympathize with Abraham. What a blow to come into the beauty and bounty of the promised land only to have it spoiled by the presence of the Canaanites! Our sympathies are with him because we so often have found life to be just that way. Our promised lands, seeming so perfect and idyllic from afar, always contain unexpected problems, pesky Canaanites, when we get there.

BLIGHTING LOVE'S FOND DREAM

For example, there is the promised land of marriage. The promise of love's fond dream, of a home of your own, of having little ones and rearing a family, and direct-

ing them to share all our own highest ideals and hopes surely this is the promise of God! Especially so when we have found the one person in all the world whom we consider perfect to share this journey with us! One hopes that all young couples who plight their troth are standing on the far side of Jordan, looking westward into Canaan with stars in their eyes.

But soon they will discover a Canaanite in the land: some streak of temperament they did not know they possessed, or an unguessed characteristic in their partner, a stubborn disposition, perhaps, or a lack of capacity to understand and anticipate our feelings the way mother understood, or a streak of jealously, or one of a dozen other forms of emotional instability. It might be the inability to have children, or that the children when they come do not turn out to be winged angels! It could be illness, financial difficulty, mediocre achievement, poor housekeeping ability. The Canaanite has many guises, but he will be there, lurking about the promised land of matrimony somewhere. You know better than I what your Canaanite looks like!

EVEN IN OLD SIWASH

Or there is the promised land of college, toward which so many are setting their faces. Someone has foolishly told them that college years are the happiest years of their lives — a crazy notion which puts a premium on immaturity, and is perpetuated by sophomoric old grads who go back and prove they have never grown up at commencement times. Of course, there is a promised land at college. But does the young man envision it? He is going to be on his own, freed from those parental hedges he has longed to overleap. He can live his own life, go where he wants to go, do what he wants to do. His classmates will all be wonderful comrades, and the girls will all be waiting for him to arrive on campus! His teachers will all be inspiring paragons, who impart knowledge to him painlessly — none of the drudgery of high school.

But a Canaanite will also be attending the college of his choice. He will have enrolled the year before, and will be on hand waiting for him, acting, no doubt, as a sophomore is supposed to act toward a freshman. Or the Canaanites may be difficulty with just one subject when all others go passably well. He may be a personality clash with a roommate, or the disappointment in not making the fraternity or sorority of his choice. He may be the weakness of character which keeps the student from wisely handling his new-found freedom. He might be old-fashioned homesickness, or a sense of inferiority. But whatever his breed, he will be there, complicating the promised land of college, and making the student wonder sometimes if it might not be better for him to go back to the land of Haran, or further still, all the way to Ur of the Chaldees.

DAMPER OR SPUR TO AMBITION

Or consider the promised land of your occupation. You have consulted your interests and abilities, surveyed the kinds of service to mankind available, and chosen the type of work which attracts you most. You have prepared yourself as best you can, have found an opportunity, and have taken a job which looks full of promise. As you studied it from the far bank of Jordan you could see nothing but auspicious prospect. The hours are fine; the pay is — well, not what it might be, but there is a chance for advancement. You like the people you met, it is a friendly town, and so, with high hopes you begin.

Before a month is past you probably discover that a Canaanite is on the payroll! Maybe in the form of a fear that you are a square peg in a round hole, and that this is not the kind of work you were cut out for after all. Or perhaps there are characteristics in the boss you cannot idealize, or some policies of the company with which you do not agree. The moral attitudes of some of your co-workers leave something to be desired, or you are expected to celebrate with customers in a way that violates your own principles and judgment. Or it may be that there is one part of the job which you heartily detest — like a minister who said that he liked everything about the ministry but preaching, pastoral calling and studying! With you, however, it is not that bad: you like all but one part, but that you dislike so much that it takes all the joy out of the rest. You may be tempted to think this is not your promised land, and that the Lord's message to you got garbled, intending you to go somewhere else.

We could consider the promised lands people hope for when they move to new towns, thinking the neighbors will be different there than they were back in the old place. Or we could remind ourselves of the promised lands of social idealism, the way we thought all would be different if a new law were passed, or a new program inaugurated. The United Nations is an obvious case. How fondly the idealists thought that the adoption of a glowing charter and the

setting up of a Security Council and a General Assembly under a Constitution would usher in an era of sweet reasonableness, and a settled peace, while the Trusteeship Council and Unesco would have no major problems sharing the blessings of civilization with the backward peoples of earth. What a promised land! But how soon were discovered the ubiquitous Canaanites.

EVEN ON HOLY GROUND

I cannot end this survey of promised lands without mentioning the promised land of religious experience in the Church. The call of God comes to us when we are in the land of the worship of the moon goddess Sin, and says "Get thee out of these fleshpots to the land I will show thee, a land of purity and goodness and love." Our vision is now of Christ and His way, so, praying for forgiveness we seek the new life; ask God for strength, and perhaps join a church as a sign of our sincere desire for a more abundant life of the spirit. At first acquaintance this promised land looks glorious — and it is. Here is a cleanness of living, a strength, an assurance, a peace and joy that we had never known before.

But even on the sacred soil of this promised land the Canaanite has pitched his tent. Old temptations return after a season to baffle and disarm us. Doubts arise to trouble our newly won assurance of faith. The early fervour of enthusiasm wanes. We find people in the Church who are not perfect; some whose membership is merely formal, and whose example detracts from our newfound idealism. Some are not as friendly as they should be. The minister is not always helpful, and some of his sermons are boring. Our Bibles are not interesting, infrequently opened, daily prayers are a chore and neglected. The Church program can be criticized: in the face of terrible social ills the Church is too timid, or perchance the Church takes stands that are too advanced for us and confront our as yet unsurrendered prejudices. Canaanites are in the land, even the promised land of religion!

BE NOT DISMAYED

What then should we do about these problems in our promised lands?

For one thing, we can learn to take them in our stride. There is no escaping the Canaanites. There is no promised land without them. Then let us have done with childish complaints and adolescent dreams of perfection, and accept their appearance without shocked surprise or injured feelings or any disposition to complain that we have been unjustly treated. Problems are everywhere. The expectation of ever being free of them is vain.

Nor does the presence of Canaanites invalidate the promises of God. The land of Canaan was and continued to be the promised land for Abraham and his descendants after him, even though the Canaanites were there. And the promises of good life are still in our marriages, and our schools, and our jobs, and our ways of improving human order, and our religious loyalties even if none of these prove anywhere near the perfection we may have fondly imagined.

It may help us to reflect that the presence of the Canaanites is necessary and good for us. It was a challenge to the faith of Abraham to have to face the Canaanites of old. Centuries later, when Abraham's descendents left Egypt, the presence of the descendents of the Canaanites in the land made necessary the forty years of discipline and moral training in the wilderness before they could challenge these adversaries. Our forefathers would never have developed their moral fibre and given the stamina of our heritage to us had it not been for the rigors of frontier life and hostile Indians. So with us, we should not be helped by an easy time in life. No one flourishes on an unvaried diet of peaches and cream! 'Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward." "The Lord disciplines him whom he loves."

Then welcome each rebuff,
That turns earth's smoothness rough.

Do not run from problems, but meet their challenge in the mature way that uses them to make you strong. Like Abraham, go on into the promised land and stay there, Canaanites and all, until some utterly impossible situation like a famine may drive you out.

FAITH PERENNIALLY RENEWED

And, finally, do that other important thing Abraham did when he found the Canaanites in the land. He had faith and built an altar and called on the name of the Lord. He did not rush to engage the Canaanite in hand-to-hand conflict. He did not take direct precipitous action. He did what to many would seem ineffectual and futile. He erected an altar for his faith, and established that continued relationship with God which would maintain his courage and high resolve, provide a rallying point for his reverence and keep his spirit open to the wise and helpful promptings of his Lord. With that spiritual undergirding he was able to withstand the long cold war with the

Canaanites, and fulfill the essentials of his dreams and high calling despite their presence. So we! As our loyalty at God's altar keeps us faithful, we shall reap the true blessings of our imperfect yet still glorious promised lands.

The Pathetic Element in Life

KARL H. A. REST, Emanuel Evangelical and Reformed Church, Manchester, Michigan

And she (Delilah) said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samuel!" And he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as at other times, and shake myself free." And he did not know that the Lord had left him.
— Judges 16:20 R.S.V.

Though we may be amused by some of the pranks of the ebullient Samson and become incensed over a number of his outlandish exploits, the net effect he leaves upon us is one of sadness. We pity him.

The life of Samson is full of pathos. On the one hand we realize his almost unlimited possibilities for the good and, on the other hand, when we look at the record, we see how he missed them. A life, which started out with such brilliant promise of good things to come, ends on the note of bitter frustration. The unlimited possibilities were left unrealized.

Our text poignantly expresses the pathetic element in his life, showing us vividly how he did not recognize his own plight: "And he did not know that the Lord had left him."

His life situation becomes all the more pathetic when we consider the many lines which connected him with God who now had left him. He was dedicated to God even before his birth. He was set apart at birth as a Nazarite; his parents made a vow that no razor should touch his head. His long hair was to be a visible sign for all men to read, indicating his complete dedication to God. He was endowed with great strength. What Hercules was to the Greeks, Samson was to the Hebrews—a strong man. The consecration to God was not merely the act of his parents nor the desire of the youthful Samson; it had divine sanction and approval. "The boy grew and the Lord blessed him," we read; "And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him."

But something happened along the way. The historian can only record that Samson began to deliver Israel for, in the end, he "delivered" nothing; his life was incomplete.

It is not, however, the incompleteness which makes his life pathetic. All genuine tragedy throws incompleteness into bold relief; yet it does not call forth the feeling of pity in us. On the contrary, it arouses our admiration as we see the tragic hero fighting valiantly against forces which are too strong for him; it inspires us to carry on bravely, even though success may not be within reach. The tragic element in life keeps us aware of the shallowness of the gospel of success.

We pity Samson, then, not because his work was incomplete; we feel sorry for him because he was side-tracked and was not even aware of his own condition. He was a man who started out life completely devoted to God but lost him on the way and, in losing him, he himself was lost. Samson cuts a pathetic picture in history. We cannot but help pity this forlorn creature who "did not know the Lord had left him."

PATHETIC UNAWARENESS

The same thing may happen to social groups. It is an ever present danger in our churches. Though they start out as devoted to God, they may lose him along the way; and, as they lose God, they are themselves lost. Recently at Battle Creek, Michigan, Dr. Robert Spike told 500 ministers and lay delegates, present at the midwest regional meeting of the Congregational Christian Churches, that too many churches are dead and don't even know it. "There is always a need," said Dr. Spike as reported in *The Detroit Free Press*, "to examine the internal life of the fellowship to see if the heart is still beating, or whether it is just the involuntary twitching of the muscles of a dead body."

This is not an irresponsible statement made by an iconoclast. Dr. Spike is the responsible director of evangelism of the Board Home Missions of the Congregational Christian Churches. His position gives weight to the judgment he has expressed; it is as heavy as a ton of bricks and, therefore, it cannot be tossed aside lightly.

Moreover it has the authority of Scripture. Not only are "dead churches" a malady of modern times. The early Christian fellowship suffered the same affliction.

Hear what the Lord has to say to the church in Sardis. "I know your works," said

ne; "you have the name of being alive, and you are dead." Once that church was very much alive. It had done many great things and made a name for itself. But now it was dead, coasting on its reputaton. It was going through all the accustomed motions, but there was no real life there. The glory of the Lord, once seen in Sardis, had departed and the church was not even aware of it. The pathetic element of life, exhibited in the church at Sardis, was not an isolated case in the early Christian fellowship.

Read the indictment of the Lord upon the church in Laodicea. "I know your works," said the Lord: "you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth." Not much life there either. There was not enough fire left to warm up the church in Laodicea. And we cannot help feeling pity for the church: the Lord has drawn up the indictment, and the church did not realize its own condition. See the church as it saw itself, and then look upon it through the eyes of the Lord.

The church of Laodicea maintained its peace of mind, quite comfortably, by saying to itself: "I am rich, I have prospered, and need nothing." It lived in pathetic unawareness of its true condition, "not knowing," said the Lord, "that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." Did the Lord's terrible indictment shock the church of Laodicea out of its complacency? Or had it coasted so long in pathetic unawareness that it did not even hear the indictment and thus, finally, slipped into oblivion?

Is not this latter alternative precisely what happens often to individuals? People live, but their existence is so empty that it may be described most adequately as a living death. They simply are not aware of what goes on round about them or within them. When Henry David Thoreau visited William Emerson in New York, he gave his impression of the people he met along the way in the big city in that heavy sentence, fraught with pathos: "I walked through New York yesterday—and met no real living person."

How is it with you? Do you gain the impression that the people you meet casually along the streets are very much alive, or do they seem so hard driven by pressures of one kind or another that there appears little life left in them? Nicholas Murray Butler, formerly president of Columbia University, said that over the tombstone of many people could be written the brief epitaph: "Died at 30 — Buried at 60." How many go through life half dead? This is the pathetic element of life, experienced time and again: Many a person has so little life in him that he is not really aware of what goes on around him. Cut off from the source of life, he does not realize his own plight. "And he did not know that the Lord had left him."

WHY DOES THE LORD LEAVE ANYONE?

What causes the Lord to leave anyone? Why does the Lord of life even depart from his own Church, leaving it only an empty shell? How can we lose the friendship of God whose very nature is love?

We could discuss this perplexing situation on an abstract theological plane, but we are able to reach an understanding much more quickly if we begin our discussion on the level of our social life. There is one incisive question which penetrates more effectively to the heart of the problem than any other and that it: How long can friendship survive neglect?

We must keep our friendships in repair, as Samuel Johnson has said, if they are not to fall apart. We keep our friendships in good condition through association and conversation. If friends do not associate with one another, they drift farther and farther apart — until finally the bond is severed. In this association there must be a meeting of minds and hearts which is expressed in the "give and take" of ordinary conversation.

So also in our relationship to God. Friendship with God will not survive constant neglect. If man has no association or conversation with God, nor any desire for it, the relationship is severed and the Lord moves on.

The experience of King Saul is a case in point. When Saul first became king of Israel, he eagerly sought the Lord and counselled with him diligently. Then, as he prospered, his associations with the Lord became less frequent and he failed to take counsel with the Lord. Finally, the bond of friendship with God was broken and we read, "Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul."

This is what happened to Samson. Though he had been dedicated to God, and had experienced the promptings of God's Spirit in his heart, something happened along the way which side-tracked him. Was it the result of a mixed marriage? He married a girl outside his own ethnic group who did not

share his faith in Jehovah God. Or did that marriage merely accelerate a trend which had started earlier, a course which carried him farther away from the living God? At any rate, his relationship to God had become so casual, he was not even aware that it had been broken. "And he did not know that the Lord had left him."'

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GOD LEAVES US?

What are the consequences when the Lord, finally, does leave us? In the case of Samson we see that his strength was gone when the Lord departed. Outwardly everything was the same with him, except that he was shorn of his locks. Yet inwardly his life situation was changed. He was not equal to the demands that life made upon him.

It is a parable of what happens to us. When the Lord withdraws his support from us, everything may still appear the same outwardly. But with no invisible means of support, our defenses crumble. There may be some life still left in us but not enough to wage a spiritual battle effectively. We go through the motions of the accepted pattern of activity, but there is no vitality in the motions. Cut off from the source of reality, the spirit becomes limp.

And the same holds true for the Church. Look at the church at Sardis. It was dead, said the Lord, though it possessed the reputation of being alive. Outwardly everything remained pretty much as it was. It went through all the accustomed motions and it conducted the ritual as usual, but there was not much life in these activities — there was no heart. It was a soul-less type of activity.

There are churches today which have much activity but no real life. Recently I spoke with a layman from a church on the South side of Chicago. He told me how his church was organized for work. Suppers and bazaars followed one another in busy succession because a large corps of workers had been enlisted to take responsibility in these various money making schemes. "We do more business," said this enthusiastic layman, "than any other church on the south side." From his report you would get no inkling that the church had a spiritual function to perform. That apparently did not merit even a passing mention. But all these activities which he regarded as a sign of life were, in reality, a mark of death. He was a member of a church which was essentially dead and the pathos of the situation was that he did not realize how dead it was!

What have all these "money making schemes" to do with the essential task of the church and what has the Lord to do with all these "feverish activities"? Does the Lord abide in the church which does not make room for the life of the spirit? Must not the Lord pass up such a church, if no effort is made to welcome him?

That is exactly what he did with the church at Laodicea. The members of that church felt that they were so rich, prosperous and self-sufficient that there was no room left to make the Lord feel at home in their assembly; he was crowded out. Read the account in Revelation and you will note that it records the Lord left that church; he was not inside the fellowship of the church of Laodicea. He was definitely outside. If the story ended there, the pathetic element would be dominant. But life was not meant to be pathetic. And it need not be.

The Lord who found no room inside the church of Laodicea was not satisfied to remain outside. Though he did pass up that church, he did not want to pass it up — once and for all. Here we have one of the most appealing word pictures of the Lord in action which has been preserved to us in Holy Scripture. The Lord stands outside of the church of Laodicea — the group which had crowded him out — and knocks on its door. He wants to arouse the members of the church out of their complacent sleep of death and bring them back to life as he raps on the door and says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne."

It is a situation fraught with pathos when the glory of the Lord passes by an individual or a church which is so pre-occupied with many things that it does not even notice what is happening. It is enough to make even the angels weep.

But how inspiring is the turn of events when the glory of the Lord returns, seeking to shatter the complacency of man so that he will realize his true situation. He knocks upon the door again and again. If room is made for him, whether it be by an individual or by a church, he makes his entry and, then, "the last state is better than the first."

Isaiah Speaks to America

FRED E. LUCHS, First Congregional Church, Evanston, Illinois

'Come now, and let us reason together," saith the Lord. *Isaiah 1:18*

Extreme peril threatened the little kingdom of Judah. The Assyrian king, Sargon, had invaded Syria and crushed Samaria. Now he was within two days' march of the borders of Judah. For years Isaiah had been preaching to his countrymen that Assyria would one day come down upon them like a wolf on the fold. There could be no protection for Judah if Judah did not mend its ways, reform its injustices, purify the state, and especially rid Zion of its idolatry. The politicians and priests gave no heed to his prophecy. They kept on oppressing the people with injustice, robbery and bad religious practices. Now the Assyrian king was marching across Syria and Palestine. The little countries to the north had fallen before the conqueror, and the people of Judah, whose turn was next, were in a state of hysteria.

Isaiah saw in this historic scene the hand of God. Judah was to suffer — there could be no doubt of that. What could Isaiah say? He said: "God is using Assyria as a rod of His wrath against Judah. You would not listen to God's prophet. You would not reform your ways. You would not rectify the internal injustices of the nation. Therefore, God is about to use Sargon as the only instrument which you will heed. Your land shall be laid waste, your wealth confiscated, your children and women led captive."

The process of history contains this principle: men and nations are punished for their sins by the unescapable operation of the forces which are inherent in history itself. Evil attacks evil. It was no part of Sargon's intention to punish Judah because of evils which were there. Sargon was no reformer. Sargon was an aggressor. He sought power, exploitation, aggrandizement. But he also was the unwitting rod of God's judgment against Judah, because of Judah's disobedience of the moral laws. This was the first truth which Isaiah sought to impress upon the people.

What does Isaiah speak to us today? Would he be saying that communism is an instrument in the hands of God to point up our injustices and sins?

PURPOSE OF POWER

Isaiah gives us a second message. When the people of Judah feared that Assyria might come down and engulf them they reasoned, "Let us make an alliance with Egypt." Isaiah said to his people:

> "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many;
> and horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!
> Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is helped shall fall down and they all shall fail together."

That spiritual truth can also be expressed in a secular stanza as we find it in *The Chicago Tribune's* famous column, "A Line O' Type or two":

> The moose has horns above his ears
> Remarkable like chandeliers.
> They serve no purpose or good use,
> Except to feud with other moose,
> And when they snag on some low tree
> He finds himself no longer free
> And in almost no time at all
> Changed to a hat-rack in a hall.
> So, as we rush to be prepared
> Let's take care lest we be ensnared."

Intelligent Americans need not be ensnared, if we recognize the purpose of military power. What is that purpose? America's great philosopher-strategist, Admiral Mahan, once said, 'The purpose of military power is to provide time for moral ideas to take root."

One of my good friends "lights the match" at the atomic experiments in Nevada and in the Pacific islands. I asked him one day in a serious mood: "You are a Christian. You are the outstanding leader of your church. How do you reconcile your religion with creating bombs which will be used to kill people?" He replied: "America has blundered diplomatically. For these mistakes she must pay. We *hope* that atomic preparedness will provide time for our diplomacy to catch up. For this reason, I believe my work is justified."

Historians will be puzzled as to why a democratic and religious people like the Americans have often acted as if military power were still the final objective of policy. Almost every time we have been insulted, we have reached for a gun. By con-

centrating so exclusively on military answers to complicated human non-military problems we have shackled our abilities to deal effectively with the psychological, ideological and economic forces which are so clearly shaping modern society.

REASONS FOR GOODNESS

Isaiah speaks to us in the third place through the inaugural address of Jesus. Remember that great occasion when Jesus came back to Nazareth. He had had a most successful mission. Now the people were glad to see him because the "local boy had made good." They proceeded to honor him. They asked him on that Sabbath morning, when he entered the synagogue, to read the Scripture lesson. He turned to the place in Isaiah where it is written: 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at Liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

We are now engaged in a vast program carrying out Isaiah's plea by helping people across the world. Let's not do good for the wrong reasons. It must not be because Moscow is now imitating us and lending aid. Let's not give aid "to win friends and influence people." Shall we degrade ourselves by giving just to win a friend? Let us not give because we expect to gain friendship. The people whose loyalty we wish are not for sale.

Should we give because we want to prevent the spread of communism? Must a nation be shot full of communism before its people are entitled to our help? Are countries without communism to be crossed off our lists regardless of their needs? Shall we, like Shakepeare's Launcelot Gobbo, run hither and thither to every corner of the earth trying to stave off communism?

There are better reasons for helping the struggling world. We ought to help because we cannot survive in prosperous isolation, living in luxury, while surrounded by a world slum. We ought to help because we have it to give. We ought to help because the world is watching with fascination the great economic competition between democratic India and totalitarian China to see which will accomplish the most in the shortest time. These are good reasons, but there are better ones why we should help. We should help because people need more than food. They need assurance of brotherhood, and the feeling that somebody cares. Those who help them should be prompted by high motives. Therefore, there is one reason above all else why we should help. Remembr Matthew 25: "I was hungry and ye gave me meat; thirsty and ye gave me drink; naked and ye clothed me; a stranger and ye welcomed me; sick and ye came unto me; in prison and ye visited me." We should help for the sake of Christ. When you give like that, the results are endless.

FIRES OF COMPASSION

What happens when you give in this manner? Following World War II we helped Norway. When help was no longer needed, the Norwegian legislators said: "We must pass along that help. America's kindness must not be forgotten. "Someone resolved that Norway adopt India! A nation of three million would adopt a country of nearly 400 million. A plan was offered to send fishing experts to the state of Travancore, on the southwestern tip of India, to pass along Norway's centuries of marine wisdom. The coastal waters there, scientists found, were full of fish. But the Indians, who had only small boats and primitive gear, couldn't get far enough out for big hauls. During the stormy winter the boats lay idle. Bigger boats? Travancore had no harbors where such boats could ride out the violent monsoons. What to do? Bishop Theophilus from the Mar Thoma Christian Church in Travancore said, "They taught us how to catch them. They taught us to build jetties and breakwaters. They motorized our boats. We now have food in abundance." "Give a day for India" caught hold: laborers, teachers, fishermen gave a day's wages; dairymen gave a day's milk; churches, a Sunday's collection. "Remember," said the legislature, "that we are simply passing on the gift of a generous America." And in India itself, where starvation is never far off, gifts are passed along. Bishop Theophilus told how at every meal. when a Christian mother measures rice for cooking, she first puts one handful into a vessel marked with a cross, for missions. So if you've wondered whether your own gifts have accomplished anything, beyond providing a few meals that are soon forgotten, the answer is that they are kindling fires of Christian compassion in places you never dreamed of.

LOOK FOR THE GOOD

Isaiah gives a fourth directive. He spanked his country, but he loved it.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith

your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Let's stop flaying ourselves and look for the good.

Remember the last Thursday of August, 1939. That morning the English Embassy left Berlin. Our German friends told us not to fear war because Hitler would not permit war. That evening we were in a home where were gathered several other Americans who were strangers to us. Those Americans spent the evening blasting at American democracy. I recall one statement, "Every reference to Jefferson and Lincoln should be stricken from our American textbooks." The kind of Americans who sometime travel to foreign parts are those who tear down and criticize, but do nothing constructive. Isaiah said stinging things out of love and concern for his country, and he always added constructive and comforting words.

Someone has said, "A friend is one who knows all about you and likes you anyway." Are you a friend of America? You can list its vices and its sins, but do you love it anyway? I am pleading, "Face the evils of America constructively." H. L. Mencken contributed much to the literary life of America, but I never joined his crusade to win not recruits but deserters. He contrived to make every American less pious, less patriotic, less proud of his heritage, to insist that almost without exception newspapers distort and books misinform, that professors are pedants, politicians are crooks, doctors quacks; preachers, hypocritical; farmers, puritanical oafs; that the American picture of things doesn't exist and democracy doesn't work. Mencken did not pretend to know or attempt to find out the remedy. At reform he did not merely throw up his hands and wrinkle his nose; he just stood apart. He observed with rueful amusement.

We must be intelligently critical of our country, but we cannot stop there. How many sins we could today name. It would fill catalogues. Let's face facts. Our record on racism is bad. But lynchings are virtually unheard of today. The free play of capitalism is improving the lot of the Negro. We have Negro millionaires and the Negro has attained jobs that pay equality in full acceptance by some American unions. He now competes and earns and lives on equal terms in some areas with white Americans. The big news today is no longer the plight of the Negro. In art, athletics and music, he outdistances us. The big news is how far he has come on his own and how fast he is moving toward full equality. Democracy is based on the conviction that there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people.

We live under a social system known as capitalism. Now we know that its history is not entirely clean. It robbed the earth of rich natural resources. It inflicted hardship upon peoples. But we believe we live under a cleansed capitalism, a people's capitalism. For a generation fiction pictured the capitalist as a devil. Now we are grateful to read a book entitled, *Cash McCall.* I think the book says what many of us want to say. Recall the lines: "We maintain that the very foundation of our life is what we call free enterprise. We fight and die to defend it but we have come to regard money making as the secret vice indulged in by all but never mentioned in the best society." How ironic that Karl Marx's dream should come to pass through the evolution of the very system he so deeply reviled. We have actually achieved those things which Communism vainly promised. America is our country. We know all about it, and we love it. We reserve the right to criticize our land, but underneath that criticism runs a current of love, loyalty and appreciation.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE REMNANT

Finally, Isaiah speaks to us as he spoke to his people: "Unless the Lord had left us a very small remnant of people, we should have been as Sodom and Gomorrah." We are the remnant. We can make the difference. What we do *counts.* We can save our country from becoming Sodoms and Gomorrahs. We believe with Bonaro Overstreet:

"You say the little efforts that I make will
do no good:
They never will prevail
to tip the hovering scale
where justice hangs in balance.
I don't think
I ever thought they would.
But I am prejudiced beyond debate
in favor of my right to choose which side
shall feel the stubborn ounce of my weight."

Another story demonstrating the effectiveness of individual action is told by Norman Cousins in *The Saturday Review*:

"In Calcutta several years ago I heard about an instance of affirmative action that made a strong impression on all Indians who know of it. The incident concerned an Indian student who was traveling from St. Louis to Kansas City in the company of a

minister and six or seven American students,. The party stopped for lunch at a small restaurant. Though the restaurant was not crowded, no waiter came down to take the order. After fifteen minutes the minister caught the eye of the manager and beckoned him to the table.

"The restaurant manager said he was sorry but the group could not be served because — and here he looked squarely at the Indian student — his restaurant did not wait on colored people. The minister listened quietly, then stood up and announced to the other diners that the group was leaving because it was unwelcome, since one of their number was an Indian student who had come to the United States to study American democracy at first hand under our government's own educational program.

"After the group left the restaurant, the Indian student looked back over his shoulder and saw that most of the other diners were leaving the restaurant too. He was not surprised by the fact that he had not been served. Indeed, he had anticipated far worse than this from what he had heard about America at a distance. But what did surprise and inspire him was the fact that so many Americans felt deeply about indignity and were working as individuals to correct it. When the Indian student returned to his country he told the story many times; each time he did so the reaction was first one of surprise, then one of excitement and pleased admiration."

What can we do? Keep our eyes open to injustice and cry out against it. Refuse to bow at the shrine of security. Take a stand for Christ and pay the price joyfully. And when we see our nation stand up on its tiptoes and perform valiantly, we shall stand up on ours, too, and cheer for it. Do some positive things, such as sponsoring European refugees. Read and study about social conditions. We are Christians and a judgment stands on our heads.

Take Isaiah seriously when he speaks:

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near;

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

When we listen to the great prophet, when we hear and act, then God's divine plan for our country will come to pass.

Adam, Where Art Thou?

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In one of his recent little books, Martin Buber — the most distinguished Jewish thinker of our time — introduces us to some of the charming tales and spiritual teachings of a Jewish mystical movement known as Hasidism. One Hasidic tale is about a certain rabbi who lived in the early part of the 19th century in Northern White Russia. This rabbi's teachings had gotten him into trouble with the government, and he was put in jail. One day, while he was awaiting trial, the door of his prison cell opened and in came the chief of police. The chief was a student of Scripture, and in that respect he had something in common with his prisoner. As he looked upon the serene and majestic face of the old rabbi, he concluded that he was in the presence of one who had thought deeply, so the chief began to ask the rabbi a number of questions which had troubled him as he read the Bible. At last he came to the question which lay most heavily on his mind. He had been reading the story in the third chapter of Genesis: the story concerninf the Lord God walking in the Garden to enjoy the cool breeze of the day; the story which relates that Adam had hidden himself behind the trees, and that God was searching for him and calling out to find where he was. So he said to the rabbi: "How are we to understand that God, the All-Knowing, said to Adam, 'Where art thou?'" Cleverly he had put the rabbi on the spot by pointing out a glaring contradiction in Scripture. If God is omniscient, if He knows everything, then why does He ask a question to find out something that He does not know?

The rabbi, however, answered the question in a very disarming way. Rather than trying to make the contradiction disappear by some theological sleight-of-hand, he sim-

ly confronted the questioner with his personal situation, with the fact that the question actually was addressed to him. Said the abbi: "Do you believe that the Scriptures re eternal and that every era, every generation, and every man is included in them?" I believe this," said the chief. "Well then," aid the rabbi, "in every era, God calls to very man: 'Where are *you* in your world?' Consider your own case. So many years and ays of our allotted life-span have passed— ou are now forty-five years of age — and here are you in life?"

The story goes that when the chief of olice heard his age mentioned, he pulled imself together, slapped the rabbi on the ack and shouted, "Bravo! A fine answer!" ut within himself his heart was trembling.

One of the most delightful intellectual astimes is that of raising questions and enering into argument. There is a restless ntellectual curiosity in man's nature, which nanifests itself from the tender age when child first pops the question, "Where did I ome from?" to the time when that boy comes back from college loaded with questions, nd perhaps on to later adult years when hat man—like the aged Ulysses in Tennyon's poem—pushes his bark into the open eas with the determination "to strive, to eek, to find, and not to yield." I only wish hat this spirit of seeking were more manifest in the Church. If only there were more aymen who were students of Scripture—aymen who knew enough about the Bible to sk searching questions and to strive and eek and never to yield until they found the hristian gospel to be the "pearl, of great rice" which it actually is! However, those f us who teach the Bible know that it is ossible to regard the Bible with a certain etachment, even a kind of curious fascinaion; and then one day the questioner sudenly comes to the realization that he himelf is questioned, that he is addressed. hat's why the Bible is the vehicle of the Word of God—and not just great literature r ancient history. Perhaps our reading of he Bible is something like David, who listned with amazement and indignation to athan's parable of the ewe-lamb, supposing hat the story obviously was about somebody else, when suddenly the prophetic ord, "Thou art the man!" struck home to is own heart like a dagger. And isn't this he way the Adam story speaks to us, particularly in this setting of worship? This story s intended to be universal, for the Hebrew ord *Adam* actually means mankind, everyman; but it is also shockingly particular and concrete, like Nathan's word: "*Thou* art the man!" For in the last analysis there is no such thing as mankind in the abstract; there is only this man—this particular man who lives and thinks, loves and sorrows, hopes and dies.

And this is brought home to each of us with a kind of concealed melancholy when the question of our age is brought up, just as the police chief's heart inwardly trembled despite his outward show of bravado when the rabbi mentioned his age. Just how old are you? Where are *you* in your life? Are you 21, 36, 45, 60, 70? Birthday celebrations are a lot of fun, but there comes a time when we are less eager to announce our age and perhaps more melancholic when someone mentions it. For the mention of our age often forces us to face ourselves. Regardless of how old you are, your age is something which cannot be computed in numbers. It is a matter as personal as your birth, your memory, your death. And when God speaks to us, we are forced into this arena of privacy, even when we are bound together into the community of Christian worship.

The rabbi's answer to the police chief is interpreted to mean: "You yourself are Adam; you are the man whom God asks: 'Where art *thou?*'" "In so asking," writes Martin Buber, "God does not expect to learn something he does not know; what he wants is to produce an effect in man which can only be produced by just such a question, provided that it reaches a man's heart."

I

The effect of this question, first of all, is to remind us of *our* relation to God.

Recently I participated in a Religious Emphasis Week at a certain university. The program theme was the biblical question: "Adam, where art thou?" For several days students and visiting leaders gathered around this striking theme, seking to find out what it means. I was a little disturbed to find that those who arranged the program had assumed that this question is only a biblical version of Socrates' motto: "Know thyself"—the motto which was inscribed on the ancient academy at Athens. There are many today who believe that the question of who we are can be settled by our own investigation, maybe a good university education or perhaps by a visit to the psychiatrist. We ourselves can find out what makes us tick, or what has gone wrong with the machinery of the ship down below the surface of the water. On the walls of modern academies of learning and offices of psy-

chiatry is written the motto: Know thyself! I do not want to minimize the importance of the Socratic tradition, for a great deal of light is thrown on our situation by modern study of society, and by the methods of modern psychology. But there is a vast difference between the kind of self-knowledge which comes by self-examination, philosophical introspection, or psychiatric counselling, and the kind of self-awareness which is the effect of God's revelation, of *being known* by God.

It is not accidental or insignificant that the biblical dialogue in Genesis takes the form of question-and-answer. God calls, saying, "Adam, where at thou?" and when any Adam, any man answers, saying, "Here am I," his identity is revealed to him. The deepest mystery of our selfhood is suggested in that answer: each one of us is a self that is dependent upon God, related to God, responsible to God—and therefore unable to find *life* outside the relationship for which we have been created. So Augustine began his *Confessions* with the prayer: "O Lord, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

But in the story Adam's response was not just: "Here am I." It was, rather, "I hid myself." This is the exposure of our selfhood which we are least willing to accept: this picture of our lives in hiding from God. There is a lot of sentimentality abroad today—in books, sermons, and hymns—which rests on the assumption that, after all, man is on pretty good speaking terms with God. Perhaps the attitude is not unlike the child who, under the influence of a certain television program, closed his bedside prayers with the words: "God night, God; glad we could get together." Too many prayers and sermons and worship services never rise much above this level. Even political meetings these days take a generous time-out for a friendly wave in the direction of God.

Whatever Christian worship means in terms of the assurance of God's love and constancy, it is not just a glad get-together. This is not the picture that Isaiah gives us: the vision of God veiled in such holiness that even seraphim must shield their eyes, and a mortal man must cry out: "Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." The prophets of Israel, whose message is strangely akin to the Adam story, insisted that the human situation—at least viewed from within Israel—was more of an attempt to escape, an attempt to hide from the face of God. Perhaps we can appreciate the realism of their view as we consider the broad social scene today: where man attempts to hide the nakedness of his soul behind modern trees such as nationalism, science, material wealth—and thereby, as Martin Buber puts it, turning existence into a system of hideouts. We know too that these "hideouts" become a system of pill-boxes, bomb-shelters, and arsenals within which modern man desperately seeks some kind of security. The modern novel takes as its major theme the nakedness of the human soul—and, I might add, the nakedness of the human body.

But, of course, we are religious people. We are people of good character. Could it be that we too are involved in this attempt to hide from God? The word "character" was somewhat spoiled for me when I learned that the word goes back to Greek drama, in which the "characters" appeared on the stage wearing masks to conceal their real identity. Good character is something to be desired, for society would fall into anarchy if we could not count on the conventional good behavior of its citizens. Indeed, the fruit of Christian faith is a kind of personal integrity and grace which is befitting any gentleman or lady. But the Christian Church is surely failing in its mission if it resorts only to "character education," and defines itself as a fellowship of "good" people who stay out of jail, are unmolested by the Income Tax court, and are otherwise socially respectable. In the sight of God character can be a mask beneath which we try to hide our true identity from one another — and from God himself. Did not Jesus find it necessary to attack vehemently the Pharisees —who were the respectable, socially proper people of that day, and did he not insist that even the harlots would get into the Kingdom of God ahead of them, just because the harlots were humble enough to cast themselves upon the mercy of God?

And if character is often a masquerade, the same goes for religion itself. There is no more common hiding-place from the Lord God than religion—religion that is conventional, socially safe, and orthodox. There is too much religion in our time which represents man's attempt to keep God under control, so that He may be used to bring the blessings of peace of mind, or mobilized to serve our political interests. Jesus got himself into most difficulty by pronouncing God's judgment upon the religion of the day, insisting that not one stone of the Temple would be left standing on another. In the end it was the good people, the religious people who sought to put Jesus out of the

ay, and whose goodness and religious de-tion rose up in defiance of God as they iled Jesus to a Cross outside Jerusalem.

No, it is precisely the good man, the reli-ous man who is addressed in the Adam ory. "It is safe to say," writes Paul Tillich, hat a man who has never tried to flee God s never experienced the God who is really od."

II

This, then, is the first effect of God's estion: it evokes the penitent answer, "I d myself," and leads to the General Con-ssion of sin which is the beginning of true rship. But if the first effect of the ques-n is to reveal the character of *our* relation God—our deep dependence on Him and r persistent attempt to escape from our e identity—the second effect of the ques-n is to reveal God's relation to Adam, to ery man. It is the truth so simple that we nnot fathom its profundity: that God is e One who seeks for us, who enters into r lives as the unexpected Visitor, who rsues each man down every road of at-mpted escape. Every act of Christian wor-ip is a kind of right-about-fact and a per-nal meeting with the Inescapable One who llows close behind us. It is the response to m who says: "Behold, I stand at the door d knock."

Now we are in the midst of the season of nt—the most sacred season of the Christ-n calendar. Perhaps this is the season nich unconsciously we would like to avoid, r the very same reason that Adam tried hide from the Lord God. The Cross of rist is not a very pleasant thing to face for if Lent is a time of honest self-exami-tion, the Cross will expose the sham of our odness, the idolatry of our religion, and r involvement in the sin which crucified od's Son. There is more truth than poetry the words of the Negro spiritual, "Were *u* there when they crucified my Lord?" is not impossible to find ourselves some-here among the people who took part in at ancient Passion Drama: the respect-le Pharisees, the priests who wanted to eserve the status quo, the Roman Soldiers, ho sought to defend law and order, the nical Pontius Pilate, the betraying Peter, e fugitive disciple. Were *you* there? In this ason the Cross calls us to penitence, ex-ses us to a searching self-examination hich unmasks our rationalizations and dis-ses our attempts to hide our inward nak-ness. Sharper than a two-edged sword, od's word penetrates to the every thoughts and intentions of the heart. As we read in the New Testament: "Before Him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

But the Cross does more than expose our relation to God; it also reveals in a marvelous way God's relation to us. Through Christ we know God as the One who seeks us with a love that will not let us go, who strives to destroy our "system of hide-outs" in order that we may find life in relation to Him, who pursues us relentlessly down the corridors of our fugitive lives.

In his magnificent poem, "The Hound of Heaven," Francis Thompson has expressed the heart of the Christian gospel. The poem is a kind of poetic autobiography. Son of a doctor, failing three times in medical examinations, frustrated in all attmepts to follow in the footsteps of his father, Francis Thompson cut himself adrift from his family. Going to London, he soon sank to incredible depths of poverty, and was rescued from starvation by a woman of the street. Delivered from oblivion and futility by a power beyond his understanding, he finally found refuge in a monastery. There, while fighting to throw off the shackles of the drug habit, he wrote this turbulent vision of man as a fugitive—a frightened and driven spirit running to hide in this place and that—and God as the divine hunter, the pursuer, the rescuer.

I fled Him, down the nights and down
the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the
years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of
tears
I hid from Him, and under running
laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed
fears,
From those strong Feet that followed,
followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
"All things betray thee, who betrayest
Me."

Finally, at the end of a long road of flight,

the fugitive yielded to the chastening, seeking, constant divine Love:

That voice is round me like a bursting sea,
"Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp my hand, and come!"

God's word is addressed to you in the privacy of your own life. You yourself are Adam, the person whom God asks, "Where art *thou*?" You yourself are the person who must say penitently in his presence, "I hid myself." You are the person who can accept yourself, and be yourself, and find yourself in the experience of being known by God with a divine love which makes any moment of time, any day of your life infinitely meaningful and eternally secure. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."